

**California MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team  
Protocol for Evaluating Incoming Data from  
Sources External to the Master Plan Science Advisory Team**  
*Adopted February 24, 2009*

## **Background**

Based on experiences in prior MLPA study regions, the MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team (SAT) anticipates that external groups will come forward with data intended to enhance SAT analyses and evaluations. However, data submissions may be numerous, and may come from a variety of sources, in a variety of conditions, covering a wide range of topic areas. A protocol for dealing with incoming data from external sources is needed so the SAT can efficiently and effectively determine whether or not such data is beneficial to incorporate as the SAT conducts scientific evaluations in support of the MLPA process.

## **Protocol**

1. External data should be initially submitted along with a completed data submission form to a designated MLPA staff person. The appropriate data submission form is titled: "California MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team Form for the Submission of External Data". The form has been approved by the SAT and is posted to the MLPA website where it can be accessed by external groups. If needed, MLPA staff can be available to assist those who provide external data in obtaining and completing the form.
2. MLPA staff person will perform a preliminary assessment of the data against the as many of the below criteria as possible\*. Much of this information will be captured on the data submission form.
  - a. Will the data help the SAT answer a question or inform a scientific issue for the MLPA planning or design process?
  - b. Does the SAT already have data of a similar type, or data that addresses the same question? If so, then the staffer will evaluate whether the data sets are complimentary (with the potential that both sets may be considered) or if the datasets overlap. This may require the MLPA staff to consult with SAT member(s) and/or other MLPA staff to determine what data is already in-house.
  - c. What is the spatial resolution of the data?
  - d. What is the source of the data?
  - e. Do methods and/or analyses appear appropriate and/or acceptable?
  - f. What is the level of peer review?
  - g. Which components of the MLPA will benefit from the data (MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force, South Coast Regional Stakeholder Group, SAT, GIS Team, regional profile or MarineMap)?

\*As the MLPA staff person performs the preliminary assessment, he/she will check the completed data submission form, noting fields that need to be corrected or clarified. MLPA staff will also make a recommendation for how and where the data should be used in the MLPA process.

\*MLPA staff may determine that input from SAT members is necessary for proper evaluation against some of the above criteria, in which case he/she may bring it to the attention of SAT members in step 3 below.

3. MLPA staff will contact SAT member(s) with the relevant expertise, and consult/review with them details on the information resulting from the preliminary assessment of step 2.
4. If SAT member(s) in step 3 determine that data would add value to the MLPA process, then SAT member(s) will present the data to the full SAT for discussion. The full SAT would subsequently make the final recommendation for how and where the data should be used in the MLPA process.
5. If the MLPA staff member determines that another component of the MLPA process would benefit from the information or data then the information will be passed on to that MLPA component.